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**APRIL 28, 2003  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**NEW JERSEY MAN SENTENCED FOR ARMED CAR JACKING**

**Baltimore, Maryland** - United States Attorney Thomas M. DiBiagio announced today that Tiron Wheeler, age 23, of Brunswick, New Jersey, was sentenced April 25, 2003 by the Honorable William M. Nickerson to 20 years in prison followed by 5 years of supervised release in connection with Wheeler's jury conviction on January 27, 2003 for crimes arising from an armed carjacking.

Evidence presented during the 5 day jury trial established that at about 11:00 p.m. on February 26, 2001, George Karamihalis drove his Lexus to a Seven-11 store and arrived back at his residence just after midnight. While exiting his vehicle to open the gate to his driveway he observed two men, later identified by law enforcement officers as Tiron Wheeler and a co-defendant, approximately 100 feet away near an alley. Karamihalis then backed his vehicle into his driveway, placed a club on the steering wheel and activated the car's alarm. He began to close the gate to his driveway when he saw Wheeler and the co-defendant hiding behind his shed.

The co-defendant then pointed a black handgun at Karamihalis and said "Give up the keys." Karamihalis gave Wheeler the keys. Karamihalis was forced to lay down on the ground while the co-defendant held a gun over him. Wheeler ordered the co-defendant to find out from Karamihalis

which key unlocked the club and if he didn't, to shoot him. Karamihalis then heard a gunshot and felt what he described as the wind of the bullet passing by his head. As a result of the gunshot, Karamihalis suffered an abrasion to his left wrist which caused severe swelling. Karamihalis got up from the ground, unlocked the club and started the vehicle. He was made to lay down on the ground again. Hearing the gun shot, Timothy Karamihalis, George's brother, came out of the basement door and confronted Wheeler and the co-defendant as they were taking the vehicle. The co-defendant pointed the gun at Timothy and told him to get back into the house. Wheeler then drove off in Karamihalis' vehicle and the co-defendant ran back to a vehicle in which his girlfriend was waiting.

According to the testimony of the girlfriend at trial, she, Wheeler and the co-defendant met earlier that night and decided to go out and "stick" someone up. Once they saw Karamihalis' vehicle, they decided to follow and take the vehicle from the driver.

Wheeler and the co-defendant sold the vehicle to an undercover law enforcement agent in Allentown, Pennsylvania as part of an undercover operation. Subsequent to his arrest, Wheeler admitted in writing that he participated in the armed car jacking and transported the vehicle to Pennsylvania, selling it for \$2100. At trial, however, Wheeler testified that he wrote down what the detective told him because he thought he would receive a benefit. Wheeler denied any involvement in the car jacking, and further denied knowing that the vehicle was stolen when he helped transport the same to Pennsylvania.

On August 9, 2001 Wheeler was indicted by a federal grand jury and charged with: conspiracy to commit a car jacking and transport a stolen vehicle in interstate commerce; car jacking; interstate transportation of stolen property; and using, carrying, brandishing and discharging a firearm during a violent crime. On January 27, 2003, a jury found the defendant guilty of all

charges. The case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and Baltimore City Police Department and prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Jacobed Rodriquez-Coss.